

# REASONS Humbly Offered, for Excepting the Rivers of Elbe, Weser, and Eyder, out of the Bill for a General Liberty of Exporting the Woollen Manufactures of this Kingdom. 22

**T**HE Act for a Free Trade in the Woollen Manufacture to *Holland, Flanders, Brabant and Germany*, passed the Royal Assent the 20th of *August* 1689, and was to continue for three Years, which expired the last Session of Parliament; at which Session a Bill was brought in for the Continuation of the said Freedom, upon Pretence that the said Freedom had occasioned an Increase of Exportation of the Woollen Manufacture into those Parts, and consequently a Rise in the Price of Wooll. But the Honourable House of Commons being then satisfied that the said Increase of Exportation did not arise from the said Freedom, but from other Accidents attending the said Trade, and foreseeing the Evils that would be occasioned by continuing the said Freedom, were pleased to reject the said Bill.

And whereas there is now again another Bill brought in for reviving the said Act, upon the same Pretences, and upon pretence, That in Case the *English* Woollen Manufacture should be restrained, it would impoverish the Clothiers of *England*: And that if all Persons have not a Liberty to Export the Woollen Manufacture, the *Germans* and others will not go to *Hamburg* to buy the same, not being certain of meeting with such Goods as they want; wherewith from *England* they might be sure to be furnished according to their Patterns: And if they cannot have those Goods directly from *England*, they will buy elsewhere, as they formerly did when the Trade was obstructed by the *Hamburg* Company.

As to the first Allegation, it is notoriously known, that when the Exportation of the *English* Woollen Manufacture was in the Hands of *English* Merchants, and under a Regulation, far greater quantities were Exported to those Parts than of late Years; the Clothiers of *England* were enrich'd, the Poor plentifully provided for, and the Rents to the Nobility and Gentry punctually paid: Whenas since the *Foreigners* have been let in to be the Chief Managers, and principally concerned in the said Trade, all the Evils now complained of have attended the same.

And as to the second Allegation, it is likewise very well known, that the Members of the Company of Merchants-Adventurers have always had in their Ware-houses at *Hamburg* vast Quantities of all sorts of *English* Woollen Manufactures, proper for the Markets in *Germany*, and more than sufficient to supply the same; and that the *Germans* have constantly resorted thither for the buying not only all sorts of *English* Woollen Manufacture, but also such other Commodities as they do likewise Traffick in, *Hamburg* being the Staple Town for all sorts of Commodities required in the North Parts of *Germany*; and when they have not come thither to see and buy Goods themselves, the *English* Merchants, there residing, have furnished them according to their Patterns, as effectually as they possibly could have been directly from *England*.

And the said Company of Merchants-Adventurers, having resolved, and published several times in the *Gazette*, a Liberty to Export the Woollen Manufacture of this Kingdom into all the Limits of their Charter, Excepting the Rivers of *Elbe, Weser* and *Eyder*, to preserve their Privileges at *Hamburg* and their Trade thither, to which they have invited all Their Majesties Subjects (Handicrafts-men only Excepted) equally with them to enjoy the Benefit of the same, by coming into the said Company for 40 s. Fine, hoping, and verily believing, that this would have been fully Satisfactory to all Persons whatsoever, so as that no farther trouble would have been given to the Honourable House of Commons.

And whereas it is suggested, That in case the said Company should have the said Three Rivers of *Elbe, Weser* and *Eyder* to themselves, they would consequently have the sole Trade for all *Germany*: It is a very great Mistake, for *Hamburg* doth only furnish the North Part of *Germany*: The Southern Parts thereof, as *Franckfort, Newrembergh* and *Cologne*, and many other very considerable Cities and Places upon the *Mayne*, and the *Upper* and *Lower Rhine*, are furnish'd from *Holland*; those Rivers having their Passage into the *Maes* and other Rivers in *Holland*: So that the *Hamburg* Company, by the excepting those Three Rivers, do only preserve their Trade to *Hamburg*, and the supplying the Northern Parts of *Germany*, which is not one Quarter Part of the Whole.



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And as to the second Allegation, it is likewise very well known, that the Members of the Company of Merchants-Adventurers have always had in their Ware-houses at *Hamburg* vast Quantities of all sorts of *English* Woollen Manufactures, proper for the Markets in *Germany*, and more than sufficient to supply the same; and that the *Germans* have constantly resorted thither for the buying not only all sorts of *English* Woollen Manufacture, but also such other Commodities as they do likewise Traffick in, *Hamburg* being the Staple Town for all sorts of Commodities required in the North Parts of *Germany*; and when they have not come thither to see and buy Goods themselves, the *English* Merchants, there residing, have furnished them according to their Patterns, as effectually as they possibly could have been directly from *England*.

And the said Company of Merchants-Adventurers, having resolved, and published several times in the *Gazette*, a Liberty to Export the Wollen Manufacture of this Kingdom into all the Limits of their Charter, Excepting the Rivers of *Elbe*, *Weser* and *Eyder*, to preserve their Privileges at *Hamburg* and their Trade thither, to which they have invited all Their Majesties Subjects (Handicrafts-men only Excepted) equally with them to enjoy the Benefit of the same, by coming into the said Company for 40 s. Fine, hoping, and verily believing, that this would have been fully Satisfactory to all Persons whatsoever, so as that no farther trouble would have been given to the Honourable House of Commons.

And whereas it is suggested, That in case the said Company should have the said Three Rivers of *Elbe*, *Weser* and *Eyder* to themselves, they would consequently have the sole Trade for all *Germany*: It is a very great Mistake, for *Hamburg* doth only furnish the North Part of *Germany*: The Southern Parts thereof, as *Franckfort*, *Newrembergh* and *Cologne*, and many other very considerable Cities and Places upon the *Mayne*, and the *Upper* and *Lower Rhine*, are furnish'd from *Holland*; those Rivers having their Passage into the *Maes* and other Rivers in *Holland*: So that the *Hamburg* Company, by the excepting those Three Rivers, do only preserve their Trade to *Hamburg*, and the supplying the Northern Parts of *Germany*, which is not one Quarter Part of the Whole.

And whereas it is objected, That the *Hamburg* Company is very Arbitrary in their Government, and that the Body of them reside at *Hamburg*, where they have By-Laws destructive to Trade, as was lately proved before his Majesty in Council, and that every Member of that Company must take an Oath to observe all those By-Laws, and such others as they shall please to make. It is a Suggestion wholly false, for there are many more Members in their Residences in *England*, than there is at *Hamburg*, and the Honourable Committee of the Council-Board, to whom the Examination of the By-Laws was referr'd, made such a Report thereof, that not one of them was by them declar'd to be Arbitrary or Destructive to Trade. Neither are they such, but alterable from Time to Time, as may most conduce to the Advantage and Promoting of Trade. Neither is their Oath any way Illegal, but such as all honest Members ought to take, being, in the first place, To be true to the Government of *England*. 2<sup>ly</sup>. To observe the Regulation in Trade, as from Time to Time shall be agreed on, and not to colour Unfreemens Goods, or else to pay such Penalties as are set for the Offenders of the same, which are ascertain'd, and if any Man transgress, through Ignorance or Mistake, it was never known but he had Favour shew'd him.

And this Bill being brought in by a Petition from the West Country, seemeth very strange to the said *Hamburg* Company, considering they have not hinder'd the West Country Trade, and that in all the Three Years of Freedom, there never went one Ship from *Exeter*, or those Parts, with Woollen Manufacture for *Hamburg*, or either of the said Three Rivers; neither is it probable that they intend to send any: So that it seemeth plain, that it is a Foreign Design to root out all *English* Merchants trading for *Hamburg*, as they have already, in a great Measure, done in all other Parts of the Companies Privileges, and consequently destroy the *English* Navigation thither. Which is humbly pray'd, and hoped that the Honourable House of Commons will prevent, by excepting the Rivers of *Elbe*, *Weser* and *Eyder*, out of the Bill for the general Freedom, that the said Company may enjoy their said Trade and Privileges, whereof all their Majesties Subjects, by coming into the said Company, may likewise have